

SICK AND DISABLED SEAMEN.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 850.]

JUNE 22, 1860.

Mr. LOOMIS, from the Committee on Expenditures in the Treasury Department, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Expenditures in the Treasury Department, to whom was referred the resolution of the House of Representatives of March 13, 1860, instructing said committee "to inquire into the mode of expending the fund for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, under the several acts of Congress for the relief of such seamen, and of appropriations to supply deficiencies in said fund, with leave to report by bill or otherwise," have had the same under consideration, and respectfully submit the following report:

That the fund for the relief of sick and disabled seamen is received and appropriated by virtue of an act of Congress entitled "An act for the relief of sick and disabled seamen," approved 16th of July, 1798, and of an act of Congress entitled "An act to amend an act entitled 'An act for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, and for other purposes,'" approved May 3, 1802, by virtue of which acts the sum of twenty cents per month is to be collected from the wages of each of the seamen employed on board all registered steam and other ships or vessels of the United States engaged in foreign trade, and all steam and other ships or vessels, including boats, rafts, and flats, of not less than five tons burden, licensed to carry on the coasting trade, except canal boats without masts or steam power, and on board all registered vessels engaged in the coasting trade. The amount thus received being inadequate for the support of the marine hospital establishment, the deficiency in this fund is supplied by Congress in the annual appropriation bills, based upon estimates to the department.

The following is the condition of the appropriation account from the

3d of March, 1857, to the 31st of December, 1859, as per statement of the Secretary of the Treasury:

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Balance on hand March 3, 1857, was | \$59,160 45 |
| The receipts from the hospital tax, under the acts referred to, were— | |
| For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1857.. | \$167,325 29 |
| Do.....do.....1858.. | 164,161 82 |
| Do.....do.....1859.. | 178,195 59 |
| From the 1st of July, 1859, to the 31st of December, 1859, so far as returns have been received | 75,935 36 |
| | <hr/> 585,618 06 |
| Appropriations to cover deficiencies in the fund— | |
| By act of Congress of March 3, 1857.... | 150,000 00 |
| Do.....June 12, 1858.... | 150,000 00 |
| Do.....March 3, 1859.... | 125,000 00 |
| | <hr/> 425,000 00 |
| Repayments from March 3, 1857, to December 31, 1859 | 10,592 38 |
| | <hr/> |
| Aggregate | 1,080,370 89 |
| | <hr/> <hr/> |
| The amount advanced and expended from this fund— | |
| From March 3, 1857, to June 30, 1857..... | 112,912 69 |
| For fiscal year ending June 30, 1858..... | 381,739 21 |
| Do.....do.....1859..... | 356,197 43 |
| From July 1, 1859, to December 31, 1859..... | 228,964 16 |
| | <hr/> |
| Aggregate | 1,079,813 49 |
| | <hr/> <hr/> |

The various collectors of customs are the disbursing agents for the marine hospital establishment, and they make requisitions upon the Treasury Department for such sums as they may require for the month or quarter, giving a synopsis of the purposes for which the money is needed; and if it appears to the department to be correct and proper, the remittances are sent to the agents as *an advance*, with which they are charged on the books of the treasury. Subsequently, at the close of each month or quarter, as the case may be, the agents account for the expenditure of the advance thus made to them in an account current, accompanied with proper vouchers.

In order to apply the funds before stated to the temporary relief and maintenance of sick and disabled seamen, two general systems are in use, viz:

1. Hospitals built, owned, and conducted by the government of the United States.

2. Hospitals owned and conducted by city or town authorities, private associations or private individuals, where sick and disabled seamen are taken care of by virtue of contracts with the United States, at certain rates per week, &c.

For the purpose of clearly exhibiting the comparative merits of the

two systems, the committee annex to this report two tables prepared at the Treasury Department, by request of the committee.

Table one shows the number of seamen admitted into marine hospitals where the patients are provided for in hospitals owned and conducted by the government, the amount of hospital money collected, and the amount expended for the relief of sick and disabled seamen at each, quarterly, from March 4, 1857, to January 1, 1860, and the names and location of such hospitals.

Table two shows the same facts during the same time, in hospitals not under the control of the government.

From these tables it appears that in hospitals of the former class during the past three years 22,330 seamen were admitted, and that the entire expenditure for their benefit during that time was \$675,494 57, being an average expenditure for each seaman of \$30 25. And in hospitals of the latter class, during the same time, 11,556 seamen were admitted, at a cost to the government of \$253,302 46; the average sum expended for each seaman being \$21 05.

From this comparison it appears that the average cost to maintain each seaman under the hospitals owned and conducted by government is nearly one third larger than under the contract system; and it should be understood that this does not include the immense amount invested by the government for the purchase of sites and the erection of buildings for the accommodation of such seamen, nor the annual interest on the same.

According to tables which may be found in the reports on the finances for 1855-'56, p. 576, and for 1858-'59, p. 136, the total amount which Congress has actually appropriated for the purchase of sites, and the erection of buildings for hospitals of the former class, amounts in the aggregate to \$2,957,326 69. So that supposing it practicable in each and all of these instances to have adopted the contract system, all of this immense sum of \$2,957,326 69 has been thrown away, and worse than thrown away. But it may not be practicable, at all places where hospitals are now located, to contract for the support of these seamen, and the committee therefore would leave the matter to the Secretary of the Treasury to discriminate and decide at what places the public interest requires a change.

But at many of the places named the committee feel confident that there is no necessity for government hospitals. This will appear in a striking manner from a critical examination of the first table referred to. For example:

A marine hospital has been erected at Natchez, Mississippi, which was completed in 1854, at a cost of \$70,285. There is no evidence on file of any seamen admitted to receive the benefit of this expenditure, except as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Seamen admitted in 1857..... | 21 |
| Seamen admitted in 1858..... | 15 |
| Seamen admitted in 1859..... | 00 |

Total in three years..... 36

while the annual expenditure, over and above the amount invested in the building and the interest thereon, for the benefit of these thirty-six seamen, was as follows :

In 1857, \$4,095 66 for twenty-one seamen ; in 1858, \$5,201 73 for fifteen seamen ; in 1859, \$4,650 48 for none at all. Average for each seaman admitted, \$387 44.

At Vicksburg, Mississippi, the building and site for the hospital cost \$67,512 58, which was completed in 1856, and the account, as collected from the annexed table, stands thus :

| Seamen admitted. | | Expenditures. |
|-------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| In 1857 there were..... | 65 | at a cost of..... \$5,740 23 |
| In 1858 there were..... | 119 | at a cost of..... 6,482 65 |
| In 1859 (2 q'rs) there were.. | 00 | at a cost of..... 2,904 97 |
| Total | | 15,127 85 |
| Average for each seaman, | | \$82 21. |

At Paducah, Kentucky, the erection of the hospital cost the sum of \$61,625. There is no account of one single seaman admitted, and yet the annual expenditures have been as follows :

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| In 1857..... | \$7,208 33 |
| In 1858..... | 7,862 26 |
| In 1859..... | 8,720 42 |
| Total | 23,791 01 |

and yet not an individual, so far as appears, excepting builders, agents, physicians, and nurses, under the employ of the government, have ever received one cent of benefit.

In Burlington, Iowa, a hospital has been erected at a cost of \$25,100, and no seaman has been admitted there, although there was expended in 1858 \$324 23, and in 1859 the sum of \$1,336 09.

At Portland, Maine, the hospital has received \$99,000, and the total cost is stated in the report on finances as amounting to the sum of \$109,174 98, and the annual account of seamen admitted, and expenditures is as follows :

| Seamen admitted. | | Expenditures. |
|-------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| In 1857 there were..... | 56 | at a cost of..... \$2,855 50 |
| In 1858 there were..... | 57 | at a cost of..... 4,402 13 |
| In 1859 there were..... | 124 | at a cost of..... 5,641 19 |
| Total | | 12,898 82 |

Many other facts of like character can be gathered from the accompanying table, but those already cited are sufficient to indicate the necessity of some change.

The attention of Congress has been called to this subject repeatedly. In the report on the finances, for 1854-'55, the Secretary of the Treasury says, on page 25: "It seems to be unquestionable that hospitals have been and are to be constructed, under appropriations now made, at places where such sailors could have been as well and more economically provided for, under contracts with local hospitals and individuals, as now done at the cities of New York, Philadelphia, and some other places."

And again, on page 26, he says: "It is recommended to the consideration of Congress whether the contract system might not be advantageously extended to many places where the United States have hospitals, allowing the contractor the use of the hospital, with the right to the United States to terminate the contract at will, on report of the collector of the port, or some other visitor appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury. If Congress shall deem expedient an extension of the contract system as recommended, there should be a law providing for it."

In the same volume, page 245, may be found the report of William M. Gouge, who was appointed to visit the marine hospitals, in which he says: "Where private enterprise, private benevolence, or the local authorities, have erected suitable hospitals, it is better for the United States government to send its sick sailors to them, rather than to erect hospitals of its own. Nowhere are the sick sailors better attended to than in the hospitals of New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia."

The Secretary of the Treasury, in his report for 1855-'56, page 45, again urges the necessity of a change, repeating, substantially, the reasons given in his report of the previous year; and the same is true of the report for 1856 to 1857, page 27.

In the report on the finances, for 1857-'58, page 105, the Secretary says: "The attention of the department has often been called to the indiscriminate and often unjust appropriations for marine hospitals, and in 1855 your predecessor caused a table to be prepared and published with his annual report of that year, which showed the various rates of cost at which patients were maintained both by private contract and at organized hospitals. The necessary data do not exist for preparing a similar table this year, but I collate some of the leading facts of that report for reference. The business of this office since that time justifies me in the belief that the evils which it indicates, instead of lessening, are yearly increasing.

During the year ending June 30, 1855, the cost of maintaining patients, by contract, at Bridgetown, N. J., was \$1 50 per week, each; at Portsmouth, N. H., and Middletown, Conn., \$2 per week, each; at Machias, Waldoboro', Kennebunk, and Belfast, in Maine, at Sackett's Harbor, New York, and Presque Isle, Penn., the cost was \$2 50 per week, each; and at other places it ranged from \$3 to \$5 per week, *none being over \$5*. At Cincinnati and Oswego the latter price was paid, but in the city of New York the price was but \$4 per week.

At organized hospitals the average cost, during the same year, of each patient, per week, was as follows :

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| At Cleveland, Ohio..... | \$4 84 | per week, each. |
| Norfolk, Virginia..... | 5 09 | " " |
| Chicago, Illinois..... | 5 22 | " " |
| Chelsee, Massachusetts..... | 6 11 | " " |
| New Orleans, Louisiana..... | 6 31 | " " |
| San Francisco, California..... | 6 62 | " " |
| Louisville, Kentucky..... | 7 21 | " " |
| Mobile, Alabama..... | 8 19 | " " |
| Key West, Florida..... | 8 47 | " " |
| Pittsburg, Pennsylvania..... | 10 71 | " " |
| Paducah, Kentucky..... | 16 10 | " " |
| Ocracoke, North Carolina..... | 18 20 | " " |
| Napoleon, Arkansas..... | 25 41 | " " |
| Natchez, Mississippi..... | 70 70 | " " |

The Secretary of the Treasury, in his report of 1858-'59, page 11, says: "I would again invite the attention of Congress to the subject of marine hospitals. The facts submitted, as well in the last as in the present report of the engineer in charge of the Bureau of Construction, demand an investigation of the subject by Congress.

"The views which I have heretofore presented are strengthened by each year's experience, and I would again press them upon the consideration of Congress," &c.

For the foregoing reasons the committee report the accompanying bill for a public act, and respectfully recommend its passage.

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